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## War Department Files

**CAPT William B. Davis**

ID: 0-394321

Branch of Service: U.S. Army

Hometown: Montgomery County, MD

Status: KIA



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# S. M. Captain Killed in France

Capt. William Bruce Davis, son of Mr. and Mrs. George W. Davis, 967 Rosewood drive, San Mateo, was killed in action September 10 while serving with General Patton's Third army, according to a war department telegram received today. His death occurred during the Normandy invasion, it is believed by his parents, who recently received a letter from him dated September 8.

The letter, according to his father, gave a detailed description of the terrain on which company C, of which his son was commanding officer, was fighting.

Captain Davis, in 1940, went into the service directly from the University of Maryland. He was assigned to duty in Iceland and served there for two years. It was while in Reykjavik that he met Gudna-Asta Ottesen, daughter of a prominent business man in Iceland's capital city. They were married soon afterwards. A daughter was born, but Captain Davis has never seen her.

When ordered to England, Captain Davis sent his wife to San Mateo to live with his parents. His widow and daughter reside here with her husband's family.

Captain William B. Davis of Montgomery County, MD.

Davis was KIA, September 10, 1944, in France near Metz at the Moselle River.

Captain William B. Davis served with the Fifth Infantry Division's Tenth Infantry Regiment, First Battalion and was Commander of Company C, a rifle company with around 40 men under his leadership. He landed on Utah Beach on July 11, 1944, just a month after D-Day. The Fifth Division was assigned to Patton's Third Army which had historic success in driving the Germans out of France. The Division literally ran out of gas at Verdun. The supply lines were unable to keep up with the soldiers. In the week that it took to resupply our army, the Germans had time to regroup and refortify the forts of the Maginot Line at the city of Metz.

Captain Davis was killed on September 10, 1944 near Metz, France, as he led his men across the Moselle River and into battle against a heavily defended objective. His actions that day were heroic.

From the combat narrative of the Tenth Infantry Regiment:

**Surprise was the object and surprise was the result as Captain Elias R. Vick's Company A moved silently down to the Moselle just after midnight. Each man was loaded with all the ammunition he could carry, three K-rations, and a full canteen. He went with the knowledge that the 11th Infantry was receiving a terrific pounding from heavy artillery and that he was likely to march into the same deadly fire.**

**Silently the infantrymen carried the boats down to the water's edge. No artillery preparation preceded the action.**

**A Company, followed in order by Davis' C Company, D Company, Battalion Headquarters, and B Company, trudged across the grassy flatland toward Arry. The flatland was devoid of any cover or concealment for 500 yards, rising slightly at the hard-surfaced Corny-Arry road running north and south. The battalion had moved in 300 yards before the crossing was discovered and small-arms fire was received.**

**It was no place to be caught or pinned down; darkness gave the only concealment. Major Haughey...was across with his advanced command post. Heavy artillery had not yet started to fall but he knew what he could expect and knew that he could not afford to let daylight catch his battalion in the flatland. Consequently, he ordered his S-2, Lieutenant Leo Harris, to reconnoiter the best route toward the top of Hill 386. The next time he saw Harris, the Lieutenant was on the top of the hill. Harris had seen what he believed to be a possible avenue of approach to exploit and had taken one platoon of A Company and one platoon of C Company under his command and charged up the hill. He and his pick-up command by-passed a chateau on the edge of Arry, fixed bayonets and actually ran up the hill in the dark. They gained the top by use of marching fire and bayonets, using cold steel to bayonet six Germans to death and forcing the rest to flee from that particular section of the hill.**

**Meanwhile, Companies A and C, commanded by Captain Vick and Captain William B. Davis and exhorted by Major Haughey, dashed across the hard-**

surface road, suffering considerable casualties from machine gun fire which enfiladed the road.

**Captain Vick, the first to cross the road, fell mortally wounded.**

**Once across the road, Companies A and C fixed bayonets and charged up the hill, slightly to the left or north of the route Lieutenant Harris's command had taken. Company C neutralized an 88mm gun and its crew of six directly in its path. As the infantrymen charged, marching fire and the bayonet neutralized enemy as he was encountered.**

**The heaviest counterattack of the day struck at noon, when an enemy tank company, supported by infantry, jumped off from behind Arry, divided into two columns and tried a double envelopment of the 1st Battalion on Hill 386. Company C felt the brunt of the attack. Riflemen and machine gunners stuck to their posts and picked off advancing infantrymen.**

**Captain William B. Davis, Company C Commander, with his radio operator, was on the flank closest to Arry. He directed artillery fire on the tank columns, disorganizing them somewhat and causing damage but not stopping the attack.**

**The radio operator was killed and Captain Davis was wounded in both legs. He strapped the SCR-300 radio on his back, continued directing artillery on further troop concentrations in Arry, then rolled downhill to his company command post and gave orders on troop dispositions to meet the attack, which had already broken through and overrun some positions. His actions further stimulated the company and the attack was beaten off with heavy casualties to both sides, although before the attack was turned back the company ran out of bazooka ammunition and rifle grenades and had four bazookas knocked out.**

**Captain Davis refused evacuation until he was forcibly placed on a litter; he was fatally hit by shell fragments as he was being carried away.**

Captain Davis was posthumously awarded the Bronze Star Medal and the Purple Heart.

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